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UK All-American Bob Burrow dies at 84

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BURROW

Most descriptions of Bob Burrow begin with basketball, but he cast a much longer shadow locally.

The two-time University of Kentucky All-American, who made his home in Radcliff during an almost four-decade career as an educator and administrator at Fort Knox, died Thursday morning. He was 84.

While his No. 50 jersey hangs in the rafters at Rupp Arena, he seldom discussed his playing days, according to his son, Brett Burrow, who excelled in the same sport at North Hardin High School and Vanderbilt University.

“He was probably the most humble man I know,” Burrow said of his father Thursday from his law office in Nashville, Tennessee. “He never spoke of that. He never crowed about it.”

Burrow took up the game seriously as a high school junior after his family moved from his native Arkansas to Wells, Texas. He led Lon Morris Junior College of Jacksonville, Texas, to two consecutive junior college national tournaments and transferred to UK, immediately becoming a starter for Coach Adolph Rupp.

“Rupp told me I was only the second junior college player he had tried,” Burrow said in a 1985 interview with *The Cats Pause* magazine. “The first one hadn’t worked out but he thought it was worth a second shot. I was glad he did, and he was glad, too.”

At 6-7 and 230 pounds, Burrow made an immediate impact upon arriving at UK as a junior. He averaged 19 points per game and 17.7 rebounds followed by 21.1 points and 14.6 rebounds the next year as the team finished 43-9 during his tenure and made back-to-back NCAA Tournament appearances. He still shares the school record for most rebounds in a game at 34 and is fifth on the single-game scoring list thanks to a 50-point game against LSU in 1956.

Besides two years playing in the NBA for the Rochester Royals and Minneapolis Lakers, Burrow spent his entire working career with the Fort Knox Schools. Hired in 1958 as a teacher and coach, he spent 39 years working on post — most as the high school principal — before retiring as superintendent in 1997.

Dr. Roland Haun, who spent 17 years as superintendent of Fort Knox Dependent Schools, said as a school boy he had idolized Burrow’s skill at UK, but didn’t meet him until conducting his first staff meeting as superintendent. At the time, he did not know Burrow was principal at Fort Knox High.

“Once I saw who it was, I couldn’t speak,” Haun recalled Thursday.

After a few years, Haun brought Burrow into the central office as the assistant superintendent for business. Burrow followed Haun into the superintendent’s position.

“He was very, very good at his job,” Haun said.

Former North Hardin basketball coach Ron Bevars, a member of the Kentucky High School Basketball Hall of Fame, coached both of Burrow’s sons, Brett and Grant. He described Bob Burrow as having a superb understanding of the game, yet never a distraction.

“You couldn’t ask for a better parent or supporter,” he said.

As head basketball coach for nine seasons, Burrow’s Fort Knox teams finished 132-88, a .600 winning percentage which included the 1960 district championship, according to the Kentucky High School Basketball Encyclopedia.

The school also was central in his life because that’s where he met his wife, LeeAnn, who worked as a biology teacher.

Todd Berry, who has been friends with the Burrow family since grade school, said many people might recall Bob Burrow as stern, an outgrowth of his responsibilities at a school on a military post, but he saw much more.

“He liked to have fun more than anyone I’ve ever met,” Berry said, adding later, “the world is a sadder place without Bob Burrow.”

Brett said, while his father was raised in Arkansas and Texas, “Radcliff is home. That’s where all the memories were.”

More than a decade ago, Bob and LeeAnn moved to the Nashville area to be near their sons “after the grandkids came along,” Brett said. “Before that he wasn’t too interested.”

Burrow had been ill for several months and died in Hospice care. The funeral is at 3 p.m. CST Sunday at Williamson Memorial, 3009 Columbia Ave., Franklin, Tennessee. Visitation begins at noon CST Sunday.

In addition to his wife and their sons, Brett and Grant, Burrow is survived by four grandchildren.

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